



Fightback

November 2013

Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

A discourse on brocialism

On Brand, iconoclasm, and a
woman's place in the revolution:

Education
& Capitalism:
Behind the
Massey-McDonald's
partnership

The first official
Climate Change
refugee?

Palestine:
Queer Liberation
vs Pinkwashing

Love and Marriage:
Queers, Capitalism
and Equality

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Welcome to the November 2013 issue of Fightback.

In mid-October, the Walk Free Foundation released the first Global Slavery Report. Drawing data from UNICEF and the US State Department, the report estimated that around 30 million people are enslaved world-wide.

No report is unbiased, and it is worth noting that the Walk Free Foundation was founded by Andrew Forest, an Australian mining magnate who has made billions through exploitation and ecological degradation. The report defines slavery as “the condition of treating another person as if they were property — something to be bought, sold, traded or even destroyed,” and also includes *forced labour* defined as “work taken without consent, by threats or coercion.” Arguably the threat of poverty and starvation works as a coercive measure even in cases of legal wage labour, as practiced by Forest in the mining industry. However, just as no source is unbiased, it’s important to draw from a range of sources. The report is illuminating from a socialist perspective.

The highest-ranked nations were majority-world nations, exploited by the minority world. India, China, and Pakistan are the highest-ranked in absolute terms. Contrary to narratives of abolition and progress, the United States has as many as 67,000 slaves.

Aotearoa/NZ also entered the spotlight for slavery at sea, with foreign ships (contracted to local companies) using slavery and forced labour. This approach by employers ultimately works undermines conditions for all workers, and can only be overcome by demanding full rights for all workers; including local and migrant workers.

With 30 million enslaved world-wide by the Walk Free Foundation’s definition, and the majority of the world’s population enslaved by a revolutionary socialist definition, the global situation looks pretty dark. It’s worth noting the irony of one glimmer of light in late October, celebrity Russell Brand calling for revolution on a widely circulated Jeremy Paxman interview (available on YouTube).

Critics have noted Brand’s record of sexist behaviour, (discussed further on P8-14) and sexism must be opposed along with all forms of oppression. However the significance of Brand’s challenge is more in its resonance with thousands of people; over 10,500 people liked the Facebook page “I Support Russell Brand’s Call for Revolution” within a couple of days.

A Facebook page is not a revolution, but it captures a social moment. Capitalism sows the seeds of its own destruction, and Fightback aims to play a part in that creative destruction.

About Fightback

Under our current system, democracy consists of a vote every 3 years. Most of our lives are lived under dictatorship, the dictatorship of bosses and WINZ case managers. Fightback stands for a system in which our workplaces, our schools, our universities are run democratically, for social need rather than private profit.

Fightback participates in the MANA Movement, whose stated mission is to bring “rangatiratanga to the poor, the powerless and the dispossessed.” Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, and the fight for indigenous self-determination is intimately connected with the fight for an egalitarian society. We also maintain an independent Marxist organisation outside of parliament, to offer a vision of a world beyond the parliamentary capitalist system.

Fightback stands against all forms of oppression. We believe working-class power, the struggle of the majority for self-determination, is the basis for ending all forms of oppression. However, we also recognise that daily inequities such as sexism must be addressed here and now, not just after the revolution.

Fightback is embedded in a range of struggles on the ground; including building a fighting trade union movement, movements for gender and sexual liberation, and anti-racism.

Fightback also publishes a monthly magazine, and a website, to offer a socialist perspective on ongoing struggles.

Fightback stands for struggle, solidarity and socialism.

Fightback
Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

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Union movement gathers for 'Fairness at Work'

UNDER PRESSURE: Insecure Work in New Zealand

A Summary Report from the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi



Adapted from an article for Kai Tiaki Nursing NZ. By Grant Brookes, delegate for the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) and Fightback member.

132 delegates, representing nearly 300,000 union members, met in Wellington on 9-10 October.

The Council of Trade Unions Biennial Conference 2013 examined the issues facing working people in New Zealand since the last gathering in 2011, and debated how to promote "Fairness at Work" as we face a fork in the road over the next two years.

Down one possible path, our future will see the end of guaranteed meal breaks, a loss of bargaining power, rising inequality and growing insecurity at work.

But the good news, conveyed in a

speech to the Conference by Green Party co-leader Metiria Turei, is that we are heading towards election year with the momentum to create a different future.

Former NZNO organiser Jeff Sissons, now working as the CTU General Counsel, began by giving an overview of where we're at now.

The proportion of workers belonging to a union fell from 50% to just over 20% during the 1990s, he said, as the National Government removed the legal right to belong to a union, in breach of our international human rights obligations.

The Employment Relations Act, passed by the Labour-led government in 2000, enabled unions to halt the decline. But it wasn't enough to generate any real recovery, and workers in many jobs

(especially in the private sector) are still without union protection.

As a result, New Zealand had the fastest growing gap between rich and poor of any developed country over the last 20 years.

Jeff Sissons discussed international research by two British epidemiologists, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, showing that this inequality is behind many of today's public health problems, from obesity, to mental illness and child mortality from accidents. And New Zealand's income gap is still growing.

The Conference also launched a major new CTU report on the silent epidemic of insecure work (<http://union.org.nz/underpressure>). Under Pressure: Insecure Work in New Zealand shows that at least 30% of New Zealand's workers – over 635,000 people – are now in jobs

without guaranteed hours, ongoing certainty of employment, or employment rights like sick leave, holidays, safety at work and freedom from discrimination. These workers often lack sufficient income and are powerless to change their situation.

CTU President Helen Kelly said the problem of insecure work could affect up to 50% of New Zealand's workers. It has spread far beyond groups like young people working in fast food and is now creeping into the "good jobs" in health, banking, higher education and in government departments.

Helen Kelly mentioned the 120 staff employed in Elderslea Rest Home in Upper Hutt, who were told in July that management wanted to remove permanent rosters and roster them all casually, according to occupancy.

National's latest changes to the Employment Relations Act will accelerate these trends and bring the problem of insecure work to more and more workplaces.

But in a keynote address, newly-elected Labour Party leader David Cunliffe spelled out his commitments for working people (<https://www.labour.org.nz/media/speech-ctu-conference>).

"Labour will immediately raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. We will support the campaign for a Living Wage for all New Zealanders. A Labour Government I lead will scrap National's unfair employment law changes – in the first hundred days.

"There will be no more fire at will without even an explanation. There will be no more attacks on collective bargaining, giving employers the right to opt out of good faith process. There will be no more attacks on vulnerable workers. There will be no more taking away smokes and lunch breaks.

"We will restore the protections for our most vulnerable workers currently contained in Part 6A of the Employment Relations Act.

"We will scrap youth rates because they

violate the principle of equal pay for equal work. We will work to ensure pay equity. Labour will extend paid parental leave to a minimum of 26 weeks, as set out in Sue Moroney's Member's Bill.

"The Labour Government I lead will turn back the tide of anti-worker legislation that has been flowing from the Key Government for the last five years." Both Cunliffe and Metiria Turei signaled support for an overhaul of employment laws, tying into CTU efforts to move beyond the Employment Relations Act and further strengthen unions, collective bargaining and security at work.

"Labour will implement a new employment relations framework based on industry standard agreements", said Cunliffe, "whereby working New Zealanders have a real choice to get together and negotiate better pay and conditions with their employers."

But it also appeared that Cunliffe is straddling a contradiction. "These changes are not a one-off", he said.

"They need to be an enduring part of a New Zealand that finds common ground between productive workers and good employers."

What happens when there is no "common ground"?

Cunliffe plugged his appointment of unionists Andrew Little, Darien Fenton and Carol Beaumont to industrial relations positions. But his speech to the Conference was silent about his appointment of neo-liberal hardliner David Parker to the finance portfolio.

"New Zealand needs a strategic shift in economic management", he said, "from a cost-based strategy that treats workers as commodities whose cost is to be minimised, to one that sees workers as an integral part of a system that creates high value products and services".

Does this verbal sleight-of-hand conceal two economic management strategies which are essentially the same?

The contradiction was also clear in Cun-

liffe's response to a question from the Conference floor about the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He expressed support for PHARMAC, but also reiterated his party's conditional support for the free trade deal threatening our state drug-buying agency.

How Cunliffe's contradiction would play out in practice in a Labour-led government will depend on how unions respond.

Metiria Turei credited our movement with opening up the possibility of a different future, a path that is "good for people, good for the planet".

"Workers and their unions are among those at the heart of the gathering momentum", she said. "Thousands have joined rallies and stood up against National's attacks".

Helen Kelly called on us to "continue the local activism to get workers on the roll and out in the election campaign – not just to vote – connecting all the campaigns to make wages and work a key election issue" (<http://union.org.nz/news/2013/speech-nzctu-president-helen-kelly-nzctu-biennial-conference-2013>).

The next step, she said, is the referendum on the sale of Meridian Energy, Mighty River Power, Genesis Power, Solid Energy and Air New Zealand, to be held between 22 November and 13 December.

NZNO supports the Save Our Assets campaign because warm homes, power prices and ultimately electricity privatisation are a health issue.

"We need to use events like the asset sale referendum to maximum advantage", said Helen Kelly. "Delegates in workplaces can facilitate the voting in the asset sale referendum – get people who do not get a paper to get on the roll, and check that those with a paper cast their vote.

"We then need to keep the momentum going into next year. We can make the difference."

Bid for recognition of first official climate change refugee



All over the atolls that make up the nation of Kiribati, desperate attempts are under way to stem the effects of climate change.

Ioane Teitiota is currently appealing a High Court decision that refused him refugee status on the basis of climate change predictions. Teitiota came to New Zealand from the Pacific island of Kiribati in 2007 on a work visa that has recently expired. He has three children in New Zealand and argues that returning to Kiribati would endanger his family;

“There’s no future for us when we go back to Kiribati,” he told the appeal tribunal, adding that a return would pose a risk to his children’s health.

“Fresh water is a basic human right ... the Kiribati government is unable, and perhaps unwilling, to guarantee these things because it’s completely beyond their control”.

His lawyer Michael Kitt told the *New Zealand Herald* that the case had the potential to set an international precedent, not only for Kiribati’s 100,000 residents but for all populations threatened by climate change. According to the London-based Environmental Justice

Foundation, around 26 million people worldwide have had to migrate due to the effects of climate change. It predicts that this figure could go up to 150 million by 2050.

Teitota’s application for refugee status was originally denied by immigration authorities arguing that he could not be considered a refugee because no one in his homeland was threatening his life if he returned. Kitt countered by arguing that the environment in Kiribati was effectively a threat to Teitota and his children who will have to return with him if he is deported.

Rising ocean levels on Kiribati are contaminating drinking water and killing crops, as well as flooding homes.

The threat is real- the government has even gone so far as buying a large area of land in Fiji to relocate the entire population. “We would hope not to put everyone on one piece of land, but if it became absolutely necessary, yes, we could do it,” President Anote Tong told

the Associated Press last year when his cabinet endorsed the plan.

Kitt told Australian media that the Pacific regions developed countries had a responsibility to help people displaced by climate change. “Australia and New Zealand are contributors to climate change because we have higher than average carbon dioxide emissions, it’s because of this problem that sea levels are rising.”

The right of migrant workers to free movement is essential not only for climate justice, but for social justice in the Pacific and worldwide.

A decision on Teitota’s case is expected after we go to press. A follow up to this article will appear in our December issue.

See also:

Pacific migration: Climate change and the reserve army of labour, Ian Anderson

Pacific migration: Climate change and the reserve army of labour

This piece, by Fightback member Ian Anderson, was originally delivered as a talk at the Socialism 2012 conference.

We reprint it now as Ioane Teitiota struggles in court to be recognised as the first official climate refugee.

Climate change hits different regions in different ways. An area scattered with low-lying atolls, the Pacific is particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Environmental migration must be a key consideration for socialists in this region.

Nations such as Tuvalu and Kiribati are already affected. Coastal erosion in Tuvalu, a nation comprised of atolls and reef islands, has already forced huge resettlement. Tuvalu has the

second-lowest maximum elevation of any country, and it’s estimated that a sea-level rise of 20-40 centimetres could make it uninhabitable. By 2007, 3,000 Tuvaluans had resettled, most of them settling in Auckland. Kiribati is also vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events; less than a week before the Kyoto Protocol was signed, a “king tide” devastated coastal communities.

Global warming: Responsibility and consequences

Radical labour organiser Utah Phillips is quoted as saying, “The Earth isn’t dying, it’s being killed, and those who

are killing it have names and addresses.” In this case the responsibility lies with the big polluters of imperialist nations, including Australia and New Zealand. With the exception of Nauru, which is subject to heavy phosphate mining by Australia, smaller Pacific nations emit far less carbon per capita than Australia and New Zealand.

While imperialist nations produce the bulk of emissions, the smaller nations of the Pacific will bear the brunt of anthropogenic climate change. As seen in Tuvalu and Kiribati, low-lying islands will be hit particularly hard. Along with sea level rise, climate change means health conditions such as heat exhaustion; depletion of fish stocks; and crop failure, in a region where many still live

Climate change/Sexism

off the land. Oxfam Australia predicts up to 8 million climate refugees from the Pacific Islands, and 75 million climate refugees in the wider Asia-Pacific, over the next 40 years.

Contested status: Migrants or refugees?

People forced to resettle by environmental conditions are widely termed as “environmental refugees.” However, existing refugee law does not cover environmental conditions. Some advocates also criticise the term because it implies fleeing persecution, when many (especially older migrants) would prefer not to resettle.

This contest over legal status also has economic implications. Rather than extending refugee status, Australia and New Zealand have extended work visa arrangements in countries like Tuvalu and Kiribati. This means I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans, threatened by rising water, must find work in order to emigrate.

Immigration serves many purposes, but for the ruling class it is mainly a reserve

army of labour. Like reserves in a sports team, a reserve army can be deployed when needed. The capitalist class uses this threat of replacement to drive down conditions. Unemployed workers function as a constant reserve army; in the 1951 waterfront lockout, bosses used the New Zealand Army itself to replace dock workers; and New Zealand bosses take advantage of Pacific migration as a source of cheap labour.

When this reserve labour is no longer needed, the tap can be switched off. Although the majority of over-stayers in this country are Europeans, Pacific Islanders are more commonly targeted by police and immigration authorities. This racism is driven by the economic needs of imperialism, to keep a Pacific reserve army in check.

Solidarity: Open borders and emissions reduction

Though bosses use Pacific migration to undermine local labour conditions, we overcome this through solidarity. Rather than opposing migration, we must

demand full rights for migrant workers, or employers will use division to drive down conditions overall.

In February 2007, management at Go Wellington (owned by transport giant Infratil) introduced new conditions to cut down drivers’ access to overtime. When a number of drivers quit over these changes, the company shopped around for cheaper labour in Fiji, telling applicants to sign scab contracts rather than join the union. However, the migrant workers got wise to what was happening and the majority signed up to the Tramways Union. When the company locked the drivers out a year later, the majority were in the union, and public pressure resulted in a swift victory. This is much more effective than scapegoating migrants, and playing into the capitalist divide-and-conquer strategy.

This tactic, seeking temporary replacement labour, is a common way to drive down conditions. In October 2011, Warkworth company Southern Paprika Limited (SPL) threatened 13 of its employees with redundancy. The Company admitted that it was profit-



A discourse on brocialism

able, citing “efficiencies” to justify the attack. SPL aimed to replace 13 permanent Tuvaluan and I-Kiribati workers with temporary workers under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. Permanent workers faced racist harassment from SPL. According to the sworn evidence of a former Cadet Manager, an SPL worker received a text message from a company phone stating that: “The best Christmas present I ever had was a nigger hanging from a tree.” In spite of this harassment, the workers persevered in challenging the company, and ultimately won the right to permanent work.

The Situationists, a radical student group of the 1968 French uprising, coined the slogan, “Be realistic: demand the impossible.” Necessary solutions to this crisis are, to all appearances, utterly impossible. Even the seemingly innocuous reformist demand of cuts to emissions has been repeatedly stalled, by imperialist nations still dependant on oil. We must fight for drastic emissions cuts by imperialist nations, open borders in the Pacific, and full rights for migrant workers.

On Brand, iconoclasm, and a woman's place in the revolution: a dialogue with Richard Seymour on the question of how to reconcile the fact that people need stirring up with the fact that the people doing the stirring so often fall down when it comes to treating women and girls like human beings. By Laurie Penny, reprinted from the New Statesman.

It's a good job I wasn't in the office last week, or the week before, when comedian, celebrity-shagger and saviour of the people Russell Brand was sashaying around. Not that there's anything wrong with a good sashay. The revolution - as Brand's guest edit of this magazine was modestly titled - could do with a little more flash and glitter. It's just that had I been in the office I would probably have spent a portion of my working hours

Why you should get involved in Fightback

We have an internationalist perspective

Workers all over the world have far more in common with one another than with the bosses of “their own” country. To fight effectively, workers in every country must support the struggles of workers in every other country. This is what we mean by internationalism. We are for open borders as the best way to unite the

workers of the world. We have been involved in successful campaigns to prevent the deportation of refugees and we urge the union movement to be migrant-worker friendly. We oppose the reactionary nationalism of campaigns like “Buy NZ-made”, and instead advocate protecting jobs through militant unionism.

We oppose imperialism

The fight against imperialism is a vital part of the fight against capitalism. Imperialism is the system whereby rich countries dominate poor ones. New Zealand is a junior partner in the world imperialist system. The Workers Party opposes any involvement in imperialist wars such as those being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, even if the involvement is under the banner of so-called “peace-

keeping”. We demand an immediate end to the interference in the affairs of Pacific Island nations by New Zealand and its ally Australia. We want an end to all involvement in imperialist military alliances and the dismantling of their spy bases. We try to identify the most politically progressive anti-imperialist groups to offer them our active support.

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giggling nervously, or hiding in the loos writing confused journal entries. My feelings about Russell Brand, you see. They are so complex.

Brand is precisely the sort of swaggering manarchist I usually fancy. His rousing rhetoric, his narcissism, his history of drug abuse and his habit of speaking to and about women as vapid, 'beautiful' afterthoughts in a future utopian scenario remind me of every lovely, troubled student demagogue whose casual sexism I ever ignored because I liked their hair. I was proud to be featured in the 'Revolution' issue that this magazine put out, proud to be part of the team that produced it. But the discussions that have gone on since about leaders, about iconoclasm and about sexism on the left need to be answered.

I'd like to say, first off that there are

many things apart from the hair and cheekbones that I admire about Brand. He's a damn fine prose stylist, and that matters to me. He uses language artfully without appearing to patronise, something most of the left has yet to get the hang of. He touches on a species of directionless rage against capitalism and its discontents that knows very well what it's against without having a clear idea yet of what comes next, and being a comedian he is bound by no loyalty except to populism. And he manages without irony to say all these things, to appear in public as a spokesperson for the voiceless rage of a generation, whilst at the same time promoting a comedy tour called 'Messiah Complex.'

I admire the audacity of it. It's a bloody refreshing change from all those bland centrist politicians who grope for a

cautious, cowed purity of purpose and action which they still fail to achieve. Brand, unlike almost every other smiling bastard out there, is exactly what he says he is: a wily charmer with pots of money who thinks the system is fucked and can get away with saying so. Yes, he is monstrously self-involved and self-promoting; yes, he is wealthy and famous and has, by many people's standard's, no right to speak to any working-class person about revolution and be taken seriously. He also quite clearly means what he says, and that matters.

I agree with Brand about the disappointments of representative democracy. If I must pick a white male comedian to lead my charge, I'm on team Russell, not team Robert. And I am glad - profoundly glad - that somebody has

finally been permitted to say in public what commentators and politicians have not yet dared to suggest: that rising up together in anger, as young people did in London and elsewhere in 2011, might be a mighty fine idea.

It's not just Brand's wealth and fame that allow him to say such things. Consider how the rapper and artist MIA was treated when she said very similar things about the London riots two years ago. Brand is playing the court jester, and speaking limited truth to overwhelming power in one of the few remaining ways that won't get you immediately arrested right now - from an enormous stage made of media money, liberally thickened with knob jokes, with a getaway sportscar full of half-naked popstars parked out back and one tongue firmly in his cheek.

But what about the women?

I know, I know that asking that female people be treated as fully human and equally deserving of liberation makes me an iron-knickered feminist killjoy and probably a closet liberal, but in that case there are rather a lot of us, and we're angrier than you can possibly imagine at being told our job in the revolution is to look beautiful and encourage the men to do great works. Brand is hardly the only leftist man to boast a track record of objectification and of playing cheap misogyny for laughs. He gets away with it, according to most sources, because he's a charming scoundrel, but when he speaks in that disarming, self-deprecating way about his history of slutshaming his former conquests on live radio, we are invited to love and forgive him for it because that's just what a rockstar does. Naysayers who insist on bringing up those uncomfortable incidents are stooges, spoiling the struggle. Acolytes who cannot tell the difference between a revolution that seduces - as any good revolution should - and a revolution that treats one half of its presumed members as chattel attack in hordes online. My friend and colleague Musa Okwonga came under

fire last week merely for pointing out that "if you're advocating a revolution of the way that things are being done, then it's best not to risk alienating your feminist allies with a piece of flippant objectification in your opening sentence. It's just not a good look."

I don't believe that just because Brand is clearly a casual and occasionally vicious sexist, nobody should listen to anything he has to say. But I do agree with Natasha Lennard, who wrote that "this is no time to forgo feminism in the celebration of that which we truly don't need - another god, or another master." The question, then, is this: how do we reconcile the fact that people need stirring up with the fact that the people doing the stirring so often fall down when it comes to treating women and girls like human beings?

It's not a small question. It goes way beyond Brand. Speaking personally, it has dogged years of my political work and thought. As a radical who is also female and feminist I don't get to ignore this stuff until I'm confronted with it. It happens constantly. It's everywhere. It's Julian Assange and George Galloway. It's years and years of rape apologism on the left, of somehow ending up in the kitchen organising the cleaning rota while the men write those all-important communiques.

It comes up whenever women and girls and their allies are asked to swallow our discomfort and fear for the sake of a brighter tomorrow that somehow never comes, putting our own concerns aside to make things easier for everyone else like good girls are supposed to. It comes up whenever a passionate political group falls apart because of inability to deal properly with male violence against women. Whenever some idiot commentator bawls you out for writing about feminism and therefore 'retreating' into 'identity politics' and thereby distracting attention from 'the real struggle'.

But what is this 'real struggle', if it requires women and girls to suffer structural oppression in silence? What is this

'real struggle' that hands the mic over and over again to powerful, charismatic white men? Can we actually have a revolution that relegates women to the back of the room, that turns vicious when the discussion turns to sexual violence and social equality? What kind of fucking freedom are we fighting for? And whither that elusive, sporadically useful figure, the brocialist?

For this dialogue, I spoke to the author Richard Seymour, formerly of the Socialist Workers' Party, once the foremost British far-left party, which recently and dramatically disintegrated in the wake of a rape scandal in its top ranks (I wrote about the case on this blog earlier in the year). Seymour and I come from different left traditions with dispiritingly similar track records of ignoring structural gender oppression, and because he is a chap you'll be nicer to him in the comments. Take it away, Richard:

Richard Seymour: My experience is that 'brocialists' don't openly embrace patriarchy; they deny it's a problem. Or they minimise it. They direct your attention elsewhere: you should be focusing on class. You're being divisive. You're just middle class (quelle horreur!). Or they attack a straw 'feminism' that is supposedly 'bourgeois' and has nothing to say about class or other axes of oppression. Or they just ignore it. To me that's quite straightforward. Obviously it would be difficult, given their egalitarian commitments, to openly defend a gendered hierarchy; but their defensiveness about this issue suggests they associate a challenge to patriarchy with some sort of 'loss' for themselves. The question is, what do they have to lose?

That's where Russell Brand's manar-chism/brocialism come in. The swagger and misogyny sits quite comfortably with another part of his persona which is a sort of squeaky beta-male self-parody in which he appears to really trash the protocols of traditional masculinity. I'm thinking of a routine he did about travelling abroad and being

Sexism

‘embarrassed’ by his pink suit case and made to feel small about it by a bunch of burly lads. Likewise, he mocks his own sexuality in his act – the stuff about putting on an American accent while fucking, or wanking with a ‘serious face’, etc. To an extent, he genderfucks, he queers masculinity. He has his hair as a beautiful bird’s nest, and wears eyeliner. His comportment is very ‘effeminate’ in some ways. Part of his attractiveness, then, is that for all his sexual swagger and rigorous self-objectification, he isn’t conventionally ‘manly’. And yet this is the same guy who makes rape jokes – not as a one-off but as something that has happened a number of times – and is reported to have harassed female staff. More generally, he has a fairly obnoxious way of talking about women which implies that they are only really of value or interest to him if they are ‘beautiful’. For someone so plainly rooted in the 21st Century, it makes him sound like a fucking Fifties crooner.

Why doesn’t this jar? Why don’t such attitudes make him sick? Why don’t the words stick in his throat? How can he be so heartfelt in his sympathy for poor women fucked over by the rich one minute, and yet sound like an enemy of women the next? Why do some men on the Left who plainly feel in some way oppressed and undone by masculinity, who are obviously hurt by patriarchy – not at all to the extent that women are, but in real, concrete ways – respond by embracing it nonetheless? It can’t just be that Brand is now a rich man. Loads of leftist men who have no economic stake in the system share these attitudes.

The system of patriarchy has a lot of material compensations and advantages to offer those who accept it and identify with it. To me, the rape jokes and misogynistic language – all this is straightforward symbolic violence, ascriptive denigration, and obviously linked to punishment for transgression. Whether knowingly or not, it’s an occasion for male bonding – the ‘naughty’ laughter – and the production of a type

of masculinity. It’s the exercise of a ‘privilege’ of patriarchy. Of course, not all men like or want such ‘privilege’. But for it to be effective, quite a large number of men and women have to accept its basic inevitability, its naturalness.

So I think the ‘brocialist’ disavowal, the pretence that sexism doesn’t matter or is a distraction, is a natural coping strategy for those who really do think they desire

“ So, in place of a unity in which the oppressed preserve a tactful silence, we need a complex unity, a unity-in-difference. This is what ‘intersectionality’ means to me. It is the only strategy that will work. We aren’t asking too much; we’re demanding the bare minimum that is necessary for success.

total liberation, but haven’t yet broken with their ‘privilege’.

Laurie Penny: It’s very clear that the discussion here on what we’re calling ‘brocialism’ goes way beyond Russell Brand and his detractors. Nor is it unique to the organised left – the brocialist’s more chaotic cousin is, of course, the manarchist, who displays many of the same traits in terms of blindness to privilege, casual sexism and a refusal to

acknowledge structural gender oppression, but has a slightly different reading list and a more monochrome wardrobe.

Nor is it all about gender. It also has to do with what we speak of in anarchist circles as ‘the problem of charisma.’ It’s about whether or not we need leaders at all, about what those leaders should look like and what they should do. The trend in the past three years has been towards horizontalism, a very precise and dogged refusal to appoint leaders or set goals, an organic resistance to hierarchy – but somehow the leaders we don’t have usually end up being charismatic white guys. How are we to fix that problem without descending into dogma?

RS: I agree that it has a lot to do with power. If you look at the SWP’s ongoing, worsening crisis, it’s really telling just how many of the accusations concern individuals who were in a position of authority, or were looked favourably upon by those who wielded some sort of power. I think that’s probably true elsewhere. Personally, I don’t have a problem with elected ‘leaders’ provided they are actually accountable. But whether we have leaders or not, I think we have to recognise that men are often too deeply socialised into their gender roles to even be aware of what they’re doing, even with the best will in the world. That’s why I think organisations on the Left should have explicitly organised caucuses of women, of LGBTQ people, of black people, and so on – and these caucuses should have real authority, they shouldn’t just be debating societies where issues that are ‘inconvenient’ can be hived off. They should make policy.

LP: That brings us back to the crux of the question, which is – are we asking too much? Is it a waste of precious time if we demand that a revolution be ‘perfect’ before it begin? That’s the issue that I’ve seen raised time and again when it comes to powerful men within movements and sexism or sexual violence, or to matters of fair representation, often by those seeking to defend or excuse the violence, but not always. If someone is

I think you are mistaken,
allow me to mansplain...



a galvanising figure – like Brand – or an important activist, like Julian Assange, should we then overlook how they behave towards women?

Because of course, there are elements of socialisation at play that make it almost inevitable that powerful men within movements who are attracted to women will have a great many opportunities to abuse that power, especially because those movements so often see themselves as self-governing. One of the biggest problems with the crisis in the SWP was that the victim, W, was offered no support in going to the police with her complaint of rape and assault. The fact that she might have expected better treatment from the Met, with their track record of taking rape less than seriously, than she received at the hands of the Disputes Committee, says a great deal.

I believe that socialism without feminism is no socialism worth having. Clearly we need to be strategising a way to have both pretty damn quickly.

RS: As I see it, the problem was posed most acutely by Occupy. They appealed to the 99 percent, the overwhelming majority of working people against the rich 1 percent. And I sympathise with

that: you can't hope to win unless you bring an overwhelming majority with you, because the Party of Order is too powerful otherwise. And I agree that class is what unites the majority.

But, how do you unify people who are divided not just by nationality, region and prejudice, but by real structural forms of oppression like sexism? The old (white, bourgeois male) answer is to say, “don't talk about ‘divisive’ issues, ignore them for now, they're secondary”. They're merely ‘identity politics’. They're somehow not as material as class. Judith Butler put her finger on what was wrong with this – what is less material about women wanting to work less, get paid more, not be subject to violence, not be humiliated? And why should class ‘compete’ with race or gender? Aren't they contiguous? Austerity is a class offensive, but is it a coincidence that cuts to welfare, the social wage, disproportionately affect women and black people? And at any rate, it won't work: if you try to impose a ‘unity’ that depends on people shutting up, they will just drop out. Gramsci was right: you can build broad alliances, but only if you genuinely incorporate the interests of everyone who is part of that alliance.

So, in place of a unity in which the oppressed preserve a tactful silence, we need a complex unity, a unity-in-difference. This is what ‘intersectionality’ means to me. It is the only strategy that will work. We aren't asking too much; we're demanding the bare minimum that is necessary for success.

LP: I attended two talks last year at which I was told by older white men in left academic circles that feminism was either irrelevant to class struggle or actively its enemy. Mark Crispin Millar announced that ‘identity politics’ were invented by the CIA as a way of dividing and weakening the American left, by way of foreclosing any further discussion.

The thing is that on one level those conspiracy theorists are dead right – issues of race, gender and sexuality are extremely effective at creating divisions within radical and progressive movements, large and small. But that's not the fault of feminism, or queer politics, or anti-racist organising. These divisions do not happen because the whining women, queers and people of colour like to pick fights and want to hold back the tide of history – in fact, we have even more to gain from revolutionary change.

Sexism

The divisions happen because we are not prepared to shut up and stay seated while people in positions of unexamined privilege try to create a new world which looks rather too much like the old one.

The left, because we like to fight from the moral high ground, is particularly bad at confronting its own bullshit. That tendency leaves it susceptible to the mawkish modern delusion that all rapists are evil, inhuman monsters, and therefore nobody you know personally, work with or admire could be that sort of abuser. In fact, revolutionary sentiment and rape culture have never been mutually exclusive. The Socialist Worker's Party and Wikileaks are far from the only such organisations to disintegrate because there is no process of accountability, and no framework by which it can be understood that a man can do respected, useful work on the one hand and be an oppressor on the other.

That brings us back to the more immediate question - if we accept intersectionality, which some people prefer to call basic equality, as a fundamental principle of making change - if we accept that sexism, misogyny, homophobia and racism should not be overlooked in any figureheads who present themselves - then what are we to do with all the brocialists? Whither the manarchists and their rousing communiques against the Young Girl? Must they be taken out and shot behind the chemical sheds? Is ostracisation the only option, or can we

envision alternative processes of justice and accountability?

RS: I suppose what we do with the manarchists and brocialists depends above all on one crucial consideration: the safety and well-being of others in the movement, or the organisation. I believe that people can change, and I am very interested in ideas of 'transformative justice' that feminists have been working on and trying to implement. But that wouldn't always be appropriate. Some men are in fact unwilling to change their behaviour, and we have limited resources. I think if they're dangerous, they have to be ostracised and anyone whom they have victimised has to be supported in whatever they want to do: including going to police if they want to.

But for most brocialists, I think it's actually a question of getting them to see that sexism is not someone else's problem. Patriarchy, and the whole system of gender regimentation that goes with it, is incredibly violent to men as well as women. Of course men don't suffer from it to anything like the same extent, but it damages them. At the extreme, it might manifest itself as homophobic murder, the literal obliteration of someone who does not obey the correct gender protocols. You get this weird thing with many brocialists (I think this is true of Brand to an extent) who are clearly hurt by dominant norms of 'masculinity', and who resist it to an extent. And yet they still basically iden-

tify with patriarchy at some level, they still enjoy its brutality - the rape jokes, for example. Persuading them that this system ultimately harms them, damages their relationships with people around them, and also prevents them from realising their better aspirations - that it, not feminism, is their enemy - is vital.

The global women's uprising of the last few years is a real opportunity to start forcing this argument open. The backlash among some left-wing men has been real, but it is also caused others to question, rethink, and maybe even notice their own bullshit.

LP: Thanks for your time, Richard. I also believe in forgiveness, and when the feminist counter-revolution comes, you shall be spared. All I'd like to add is that right now, women and girls across the world are clearly not going to wait patiently for liberation until the conclusion of a class struggle that speaks largely to and about men. They want change now and they are going to keep demanding it, and I believe that they - that we - will win. And brocialists everywhere had better listen, or get left behind.

See also

- *SWP: Sexism on the Left*, Daphne Lawless (<http://tinyurl.com/m7dakaz>)
- *Safer Spaces in Political Organising*, Kassie Hartendorp (<http://tinyurl.com/m7dakaz>)





Education and Capitalism: Behind the Massey- McDonald's partnership

Professor Ted Zorn and McDonald's NZ managing director Patrick Wilson.

by Morgan Welch, *Fightback Christchurch*

Massey University has formed a partnership with McDonalds Restaurants that will allow a number of McDonald's store managers to cross-credit their prior learning towards an undergraduate business degree. An in-house course run for McDonalds by an external provider, Service HQ, provides managerial staff with the National Diploma in Hospitality, a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) accredited qualification. The head of Massey's College of Business, Professor Ted Zorn, told the New Zealand Herald "We have gone into McDonald's and looked at what they are doing...We assessed the content [of the in house training], and found there was a pretty good fit with some of our first-year papers."

This agreement was initiated by McDonalds, who approached several tertiary institutions before selecting Massey, though director of teaching and

learning for Massey's College of Business, Shirley Carr, told Fairfax News that she hoped it was the first of many such arrangements with companies as part of the university's drive to forge closer links with business.

The situation is telling when it comes to how education happens in what is sometimes referred to as late capitalist society. The agreement has been decried by supporters of the humanities and the social sciences, seen as a further blow to the battered liberal arts education that has suffered cuts as funding for science, technology and trades education has increased. This publication aims to provide a critical analysis of society, and as such recognises the importance of the disciplines broadly defined as 'the arts'.

However, placing the arts as in competition with other disciplines is not useful, given that any society, capitalist or post-capitalism, will require people with a diverse range of skills and knowledge- including even some of the 'management' skills Massey will teach McDonalds employees. A blended work

and study model of education is actually something that has been advocated by Marxist educationists at various times in history, and has been a demand of the organised labour movement.

In addition to this, arguments that come from a defence-of-arts perspective can veer toward an ahistorical line that supposes a past where education in those disciplines was provided widely and comprehensively, this has never actually been the case, and education serving the interests of the employing class is nothing new.

Education and early capitalism

When capitalism emerged in the United Kingdom it grew to become the dominant economic system through mass production, which divided the production of goods into a series of small tasks, people concentrated in factories could be taught quickly the task they needed to perform. Mass production is much more efficient than individual

Tertiary education

production, and meant wealth could be created in great excess to that required to provide workers with the means of subsistence, which was paid in wages.

At the time of the industrial revolution in Britain people had little formal education, which was not required for the new factory jobs. Primary education for children was provided by churches with the support of charity, and some public funding from the 1830s. Primary education was not compulsory until 1870.

Secondary education throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century consisted of grammar schools; academic schools covered by student fees that prepared students for university, and the new tax-funded technical schools, providing students with the education required for new jobs that had been created by industrialisation, but required more skills than production line factory labour.

Universities at this time remained elite institutions, but the wealth created by capitalism meant a small proportion of the population could be engaged in study and research, this is the reason the nineteenth century is also associated with great advancement in science as well as industry. The social sciences—economics, sociology, anthropology—also emerged at this time.

The British model of education was spread to the colonies, including New Zealand, and the two countries followed a similar path, both making secondary education universal in 1944. Universal secondary education had been a demand of the labour movement and in the New Zealand context was among the reforms of the first Labour government. Of course this was not as comprehensive as secondary education today and many students left at sixteen or even younger.

The post war boom

In the economic boom following world war two a substantial amount

of society's wealth was available, via high taxation on the rich, for higher education and research. In the USA in particular, this meant the huge financial support for science and engineering which laid the foundation for the space programme and the internet. Money was also available for the arts, and when popular movements pushed for new disciplines such as woman's studies (gender studies) and ethnic studies programs, these could be provided.

Tertiary education in New Zealand was free, and a prosperous economy meant students could choose their field of study with little concern about the lack of career options it provided, or fear of poorer economic wellbeing in the future compared to studying an alternative. It's important to note however that the mid twentieth century wasn't a golden age of higher learning, today a third of New Zealanders aged 55 to 64 have a tertiary qualification compared to almost half for New Zealanders aged 25 to 35. Secondary school examinations at this time were designed to fail half of the students taking them, regardless of ability, so university education was not an option for many.

Neoliberalism

The post war economic boom came to an end in the 1970s; in the decade following the election of the infamous fourth Labour government in 1984 changes to what was provided by the state were made across the board, including in education. In 1992 (under a National government elected the previous year) tertiary education was commoditised to an extent with the introduction of user pays. The state would still fund each student to study, but the student would pay a proportion of the costs themselves.

With "user pays", education became an individual rather than a social responsibility. In line with the ideology of individualism that accompanied neoliberal economic reforms, students

became consumers of education in a marketplace. When secondary examinations changed to the modern system of NCEA, which ended the arbitrary process of failing perfectly capable students, those who studied a discipline that didn't lead to a prosperous career (along with those who choose not to study at all) were seen as making a poor choice, and ultimately responsible for further low wages or unemployment.

The growth of some disciplines and decline in others is not entirely the result of students (incredibly restricted) choice. The capitalist class is incredibly influential in what kind of education the state funds, when politicians talk of matching education to the needs of 'business' 'the market' or 'the economy' what is literally meant is using public money to educate workers to a level required to perform today's jobs. "Success in education is essential to the Government's goal of building a productive and competitive economy." Reads the State Services Commission website, "It also helps New Zealanders develop the skills needed to reach their full potential and contribute to the economy and society." Far from mere rhetoric, both these statements are accurate.

Education today

As manufacturing jobs continue to move overseas and other low skilled jobs are automated, the New Zealand working class of the future will need to be more highly skilled than previous generations. This is why the current government has put emphasis on increasing the number of 18 year olds with NCEA Level 2, and the number of 25 year olds with a level 4 qualification, as well as from 2014 providing all level 1 and 2 courses to under 25 year olds for free—this is, completely state funded, with not payment from students as individuals.

To oppose the expansion of tertiary education for the working class would be misguided, while the major beneficiaries is the capitalist class, a worker also ben-

Tertiary education/Youth work

efits from increased education. Universal tertiary education (though unlikely to be free education under capitalism) is the direction New Zealand is heading in, and the form that education takes is likely to be different than tertiary education has been up until now.

As mentioned previously, the blended model of work and study that McDonalds managers will be undertaking is not dissimilar than models advocated by Marxist thinkers on education, and practised in the first decades of the Soviet Union. Educational ideas oppositional to capitalism can become absorbed into it – this has happened many times before- though this doesn't mean they suddenly become bad ideas.

There are serious shortcomings with the Massey-McDonalds scheme, the only ones with access to degree level education subsidised by McDonalds will be managers. In practice managing operations and managing people are not separate. While skills such as providing training and overseeing payroll are essential in any workplace, manager's

authority over workers means they can often join the wrong side of industrial disputes -like the recent McStrike campaign- education provision could mean more managers seeing their interests with those of the corporation rather than the rest of the work force.

McDonalds likes to play up the fact that most of their management -even at a senior level- have risen up from the shop floor, but the hierarchical structure of the business means the vast majority of workers will not advance to that level and gain the opportunities that come with it. McDonalds provides sub degree education (with NZQA accredited hospitality qualifications) to all long serving employees, though this is only the first step, not a complete pathway to a hospitality career.

Fundamentally, training schemes are not something to oppose. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation and the Service and Food Workers Union have long advocated for an educational pathway for aged care workers to become qualified nurses (arguably this is far more socially

beneficial than training restaurant managers) and there are many other industries where this model could be applied. However, skills-based education must not be tied to corporate demands.

Where does this leave the arts?

Student groups and education unions have had limited success in defensive campaigns to keep arts education. While an arts education is valuable, it does not necessarily have to be a thing apart from work or other learning. Arts subjects could be provided alongside science and/or practical training. With more people gaining tertiary education, including through mixed work-study models, perhaps the next step is for the various stakeholders in education; students, educators, unions- to advocate for a more comprehensive tertiary education, combining technical and scientific subjects with social science and humanities.

National youth wellbeing research highlights the impacts of increasing poverty

by Polly Peek, Fightback Christchurch

A summary of the 'Youth '12' research carried out by the Adolescent Health Research Group based at Auckland University has recently been released, showing a number of positive health and social wellbeing factors improving for New Zealand teens, but also revealing concerning increases in poverty-related issues.

The 'Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand' survey, conducted by the Adolescent Health Research Group based at Auckland University, has been completed three times in the last ten years, result-

ing in the 'Youth '02', 'Youth '07' and, most recently, 'Youth '12' reports.

Randomly selected high schools are approached to take part in the study, which covers topics include ethnic identity and culture, family relationships, school, injuries and violence, health and healthcare, emotional health, food and eating, leisure activities, sexual health, alcohol, smoking and other drugs, and community involvement. A portion of students enrolled with the school are invited to complete the comprehensive questionnaire which "allows us to take an ecological approach to identifying the risks and protective factors in young people's lives". In total, about 3% of the New Zealand secondary school popula-

tion are involved.

Because questions are kept consistent in each survey, comparisons are able to be made across time, showing what aspects of youth health and wellbeing are improving or getting worse, and allowing for further research to expand on the findings. A summary of the Youth '12 study was released recently and has shown some interesting results.

It points to role that government policy and the economic climate have in shaping young people's material conditions and wellbeing outcomes. Where funding has been allocated for on-going health promotion campaigns and accessible support, New Zealand teenagers' wellbeing has improved significantly

Youth work/Pink-washing

from the initial Youth '02 study to today. Use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes have decreased for youth, as has dangerous and drunk driving.

Experience of physical violence, sexual abuse and fighting are also declining and fewer students are reporting having made a suicide attempt.

In terms of protective factors, more students are feeling safe at school and that their teachers and other adults are fair and care about them. More students are wearing seatbelts and increasing numbers are getting regular exercise.

Despite overall increases to many areas of health and wellbeing, there are some worrying trends visible, particularly in areas where young people are vulnerable to the impact of economic conditions and public spending cuts.

Young people today are reporting being able to spend less time with their families, and having less of a sense of wellbeing and more depressive symp-

toms. They are much less likely to have part time work than teenagers five or ten years ago and are considerably less able to access a doctor or other health-care support. The research also shows decrease in condom use, quite possibly related to this healthcare inaccessibility. The most concerning change in students' lives, however, is the inability of their families to afford

food. Between 2002 and 2012 there has been a startling 49% increase in young people reporting that their parents worry about having money for food.

The political and economic climate has changed considerably in the last ten years. Following the global financial crisis of 2008 today's youth are growing up in an environment of high unemployment and significant social welfare restructuring, as well as other cuts to public services.

One important thing that the Health and Wellbeing studies have highlighted is the sensitivity of young people to

their environments. Where funding has been invested in health promotion and support, young people have thrived in otherwise challenging situations. Where the market has been allowed to impact on youth un-buffered, aspects of young people's wellbeing have been significantly affected.

These findings call into question some of the stereotypes we often associate with young people,

such as engaging in risky behaviour and being inherently disinterested in their health and wellbeing, willing to compromise on these for short-term enjoyment.

These stereotypes, while having something of a base in youth development theory, are problematic and can serve an ideological function – obscuring the fact that with good publicly funded health education and services, and an economy that enables people to work and earn more than subsistence wages, young people are bound to do incredibly well.



FIND THE DIFFERENCES



Palestine

**When They Find You Are Gay
They Hang You.....**

ISRAEL

**We Love And Admire Gay
Men And Women....**

**Share this if you agree that Israel is truly a beacon of freedom, liberty
and PROGRESSIVENESS**

This talk by Ali Nissenbaum was originally delivered as part of Beyond, a conference organised by Queer Avengers. It is reprinted here from the Not Afraid of Ruins blog.

Note: for the purpose of this article I'm using 'queer' as a broad term to describe all of us who are marginalised because our gender or sexual identity isn't normative. That includes trans, intersex, pansexual, lesbian and gay folks, among others. I know that 'queer' is a culturally specific label and that not all gender/sexually diverse people identify as such. Let me start by explaining a few concepts that are useful for understanding the relationship between struggles for queer liberation and nationalism.

Homonormative: a normative way of being gay. The 'proper' gay person is someone who's cisgendered, monogamous, White, middle-class, and definitely not disabled—because disabled people aren't supposed to have a sexuality. The

normative gay just wants to be allowed to serve in the military, to get a job, get married, have babies, and fit in to heteronormative society.

Homonationalism: means homonormative nationalism. This is about the way that the cause of GLBT rights—but more often than not just G and L rights—gets used to prop up nationalism and justify imperialism and militarism. One example is when people justify military attacks on Iran by arguing that it is a homophobic country. Another example is when people blame homophobia in New Zealand on Māori and Pacific Islander communities, who are portrayed as conservative and homophobic.

It's worth thinking about the correlation between the social acceptance of some queers (normative ones) and racism, especially anti-Arab and Muslim racism. Identity is always formed in opposition to someone else, it's 'us' and 'them'. Normative gays are allowed entry into 'proper society' in order to emphasise

the dichotomy between the White West (modern, progressive, liberal) and the Brown East: Arabs, Muslims, Southeast Asians and other populations who are constructed as conservative, patriarchal, homophobic, violent, backwards and terrorists.

Pinkwashing: a term used to describe the way that GLBT rights are used to whitewash over unethical behavior. We see this when corporations use gay-friendly marketing to distract from the terrible way they treat their workers. We see it when NZ Defence wins an award for being an equal opportunity employer, which is another way of saying that anyone, regardless of sexual or gender identity, can join in the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan.

For the purpose of this talk I'm going to focus on the state of Israel as an example of pinkwashing—partly because I'm an Israeli, or to put it more accurately, I'm a settler-colonist on Palestinian land. Israel is a state that consistently oppresses its Indigenous Palestinian

Pink-washing

population in order to maintain an ethnically-exclusive state. In other words, it's an apartheid state. Maintaining an apartheid state requires a huge amount of PR work to convince the rest of the world that they should allow you to continue oppressing people. So the state of Israel has come up with a marketing campaign called 'Brand Israel'.

Part of 'Brand Israel' is to promote Israel as a queer-friendly country. This is really a two-pronged approach: (1) situate Israel as a progressive, modern, pro-LGBT country and (2) construct Arabs and Muslims in general, and Palestinians in particular as conservative, patriarchal, and violently homophobic.

What's wrong with this picture?

First of all the image on page 19 is a bit misleading. The two soldiers in this photo aren't lovers, and actually one of them is heterosexual. The photo was staged by the Israeli Defence Force Spokesperson's Office and posted on its facebook page with the caption 'It's Pride Month. Did you know that the IDF treats all of its soldiers equally? Let's see how many shares you can get for this photo.'

The image on the left is just plain incorrect. This photo isn't from Palestine, it's from Iran. The two boys in this photo were hanged—though their supposed crime is unclear. Originally Western media outlets were reporting they were hanged for having consensual sex with each other, but human rights NGOs haven't found any evidence that corroborates this claim, it's more likely that they had raped a younger boy. Either way, what happened to them is horrific and inexcusable—the death penalty is never ok, especially against children. But this is an example of how information about human rights abuses is manipulated to justify imperialist intentions, whether against Palestinians or against Iran.

Part of this 'Brand Israel' campaign has been to promote Israel as a gay tourism

destination. These are Vincent Autin and Bruno Boileau, the first gay French couple to get married after France legalised same-sex marriage. Hila Oren, the CEO of Tel Aviv Global & Tourism, came up with a great marketing idea. She invited this couple to come honeymoon in Tel Aviv during Tel Aviv pride week. According to Oren, 'the meaning beneath is our mission, to broaden the conversation about Tel Aviv, for people to know that Tel Aviv is a place of tolerance, of business and tourism, a place beyond the conflict'. Vincent Autin told Israeli media that 'for us it's very important to be a bridge, especially here in the Middle East, so that what's happened in France, and the way we are received and embraced here, can become an example for the rest of the Middle East.' This is homonationalism—the idea that Westerners constitute 'an example' that the Middle East should follow.

This kind of pinkwashing has found its way into the queer community in New Zealand too. At Queer the Night 2011 someone showed up with a pro-Israel placard. Queer the Night was supposed to be about standing up against transphobia, homophobia and oppression. But somebody managed to derail it and use it as an opportunity to incite prejudice against Arab and Muslim people.

Sometimes pinkwashing is a lot subtler than that. I was pretty shocked when I read this article in the June issue of Express. The author was clearly impressed with the Gay Cultural Centre in Tel Aviv, and on the surface this seems pretty innocuous. But celebrating Tel Aviv as a queer-friendly city without acknowledging that it is a city built on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is pinkwashing racism—as the Jewish American lesbian writer Sarah Schulman puts it 'Tel Aviv is a theater set, behind it is the reality of profound oppression and violation of human rights.'

Pinkwashing arguments are built on a false logic. Transphobia and homophobia aren't limited to Arab and Muslim

societies. Israel is also a homophobic and transphobic society. New Zealand has its own problems with anti-queer oppression. More than that, struggles against racism and colonisation and struggles against transphobia and homophobia can't be fought separately. Homophobia, transphobia, racism and occupation are all intertwined; they are part of the matrix of violence and oppression in Palestine. This isn't just an abstract idea, it has real consequences for people's safety. For example, there's a history of the Shabak, Israel's General Security Services, black-mailing Palestinian queers into becoming informants—because they know that outing them could endanger their lives. The lack of freedom of movement for Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank means that queers living in transphobic or homophobic communities cannot easily leave.

This is why Palestinian queer groups like al-Qaws, Aswat and Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions all work to fight both anti-queer oppression, and the racism and colonialism of the Israeli state.

Palestinian queer groups endorse the Palestinian call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel. Palestinian civil society groups launched the BDS campaign in 2005, and part of the campaign is 'queer BDS' which is specifically about challenging Israel's pinkwashing. Joining the BDS campaign is one way that we can be solid with all Palestinians—queer and straight.

Here in Aotearoa we've recently established the Aotearoa BDS Network, and our first campaign is focusing on G4S, a private security company that provides prisons and checkpoints for Israel. We're inviting queer organisations to endorse the campaign by signing the letter we're writing to Super Fund asking them to divest their shares in G4S. If you want to learn more, you should come along to our campaign launch on November 2 at Thistle Hall.



Love and Marriage: Queers, Capitalism and Equality

Bill Logan marching as part of a Queer the Night march

After a six-and-a-half month passage through Parliament, marriage was finally legalized for same-sex couples in New Zealand in April 2013. Among the questions raised among left-wing queer and trans activists was whether to support marriage equality as a democratic right, or to oppose marriage in general. In October 2013, the Beyond conference organised in Wellington by the Queer Avengers followed up on some of these issues. This piece by Bill Logan was originally delivered as part of Beyond, and is reprinted here from the International Bolshevik Tendency website.

Like most of us, I'm far more interested in love than marriage, but I want to consider the connections and antagonisms between love and marriage today. I don't want to attempt a precise definition of love here, but I don't merely mean deep caring for our fellow-humans, or close friendship, or filial affection, or warm companionship.

All those are great things, and often in the world we live in today, they are our best sources of personal security. But what we are talking of here is passionate, spontaneous sexual love.

Now, in this sense love and marriage both have long histories in Western culture, going back thousands of years, but they are almost entirely separate histories. Love and marriage have quite simply had nothing to do with each other. Even the fiction that love and marriage should somehow be combined is rather recent, and rather unevenly applied. Marriage has always been about status and property. Even in the last two hundred years, when marriage has attempted to appropriate love for its own purposes, it is a debased, deformed kind of love that marriage has sought to incorporate – a love where the perfect match involves celebrity, power and money, and where your grandmother tells you it is as easy to fall in love with a rich woman as with a poor one. The

ideal marriage requires you to love a millionaire, a film star, or preferably a prince – all of whom are probably pretty unlovable.

The Pet Shop Boys are not exactly right that love is a bourgeois construct – it would be more true to say that love is a feudal construct, because the modern ideology of love is primarily shaped in the ideals of the knightly chivalry of the Middle Ages. And of course love under chivalry was always outside marriage, and about either unfulfilled yearning, or unadulterated adultery. Marriage was about power and property, and love was counterposed to it.

If love penetrated the ruling classes during the age of chivalry, it had a pre-history, which is largely unwritten. Before chivalry, love was confined to the lower orders. Citizens of Athens and Rome did not love their wives, though they may have been infatuated with a slave-girl or a boyfriend. But servants and shepherd boys, whose lives went

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mostly unrecorded because they didn't matter, were able to love each other, and love intensely. Although the record is sparse, traces are inevitably left in song and verse.

We live in a cynical age, and intelligent people are not supposed to believe in love. However, in hints and traces, and also in anthropological studies of pre-class societies, we can see that patches, incidents or explosions of love have formed in most of the different kinds of social arrangements our species has tried out. We can see that love is sometimes capable of great heroism against the predominating institutions of society. And we can see that love has been most widespread where power, status and property are weakest. Indeed, what I want to argue here is that love can appear in many environments, and has extraordinary potential for social disruption, but if love is to transcend the exceptional and episodic, and if there is to be a generalized freedom to love, then class society must be dismantled.

Of course the spontaneity and diverse forms of love – its passion and sheer joy – do not sit easily beside the authority and hierarchy necessary to run a class society. So marriage has become a tool for the *organization* of love. Love is a danger, and marriage is put into service for its moderation and debasement, and to render it uniform.

So heterosexual marriage is the standard, against which all other relationships are measured. Parental expectations, housing policy and architecture, family law, and popular music all tend to push toward a marriage-like form. To the extent that a relationship is in the nature of a marriage – a heterosexual marriage – it is judged successful.

And so we have the modern nuclear family under capitalism as an instrument for the mass organization of domestic tasks and reproduction, and for disciplined training of the workforce. The ideal wherein love and marriage are combined has a dual function – of bureaucratizing and routinizing love to

render it socially harmless, and of spicing up marriage to make it acceptable.

This is not to say, of course, that there is no real love in the world today – indeed many get a taste of genuine love, and some get a full serving, but the commercial mass-media love industry and the attempts to tie love to the institution of marriage have profoundly misshapen it. The pursuit of love is combined with a pursuit of money, power and fame, and the experience of love is twisted by crass commercialism, showy weddings, and the legal and social controls that define marriage.

Nor is this to say that marriage at an individual level is necessarily a betrayal of love. Each of us must make their way as best they can in this broken world, and marriage helps many negotiate a path. But as a cultural institution, marriage is fundamentally conservative.

And so we come to the struggle for same-sex marriage rights, which has emerged with remarkable historical speed on a global basis very recently. When I was a younger man fighting for homosexual law reform in the 1985–86 campaign, gay marriage was not something we thought of as a possibility to be considered.

In the context of the way marriage is carried out, its social role and its debasement of love, it is frankly not surprising that radical queers looked on this movement with great suspicion. Why would we want to buy into the process whereby the creative, disruptive, passionate power of love was tamed to fit the conservative straightjacket of marriage?

But marriage will not be transcended by maintaining the limitations and constraints on it, but by opening it up, and by freeing it of the compulsions which surround it – compulsions which are ideological, legal and material.

So of course, most of us took a deep breath, and supported the marriage reform. We supported it quite simply because legal prohibition is not an in-

strument of liberation. Many of us don't want to join the army or the police force, or to become a truck driver, or adopt children. But we want the same rights to do those things as anyone else. The point about the fight for the right to get married was not that we were advocating that all of us queer people should actually get married, but that we should be allowed to get married.

While there were some attractions in the argument that we want the right to be different, not merely to be the same as the majority, the truth is that the fight against oppression (whether sexual, religious, national or economic) is always a fight for equal rights, the right to be the same. Separate but equal, is not equal. Where Muslims or atheists do not have the same rights as Christians, they are pushed to make their beliefs about religion invisible. Where queers do not have the same rights as straights, they are pushed to make their queerness invisible. It is only through winning the right to be the same that we really gain the freedom to be different.

So we supported the campaign for equal marriage rights. But it was hardly an earth-shattering episode, and although our little victory in that campaign was quite satisfying, mostly because we don't get to experience very many victories, it was not exactly a turning point in history. The campaign was an occasion for some highly reversible mass consciousness-raising, and possibly laid some groundwork for the more important struggle to protect queer kids from bullying in high-schools. But the objective and concrete achievement of this campaign was actually just a tiny logical extension of bourgeois democratic rights, which will have very little impact on our real lives. At the end of the day it was not a big deal.

When the celebrations died down queer and trans people still faced discrimination and oppression in families and schools and workplaces, as we always knew we would. In my counseling practice I still see heteronormativity

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pushing people to the brink of death. I see very high levels of stress and addiction among queers. I see the Independent Youth Benefit denied to adolescents who have nothing – no family, no accommodation, no job [though it is routinely given to youth who are not queer or trans who are cut off from financial support by family breakdown]. There are in fact extraordinary levels of unemployment among young queers right now. I still see health professionals refusing to take seriously the problem of queer and trans suicidality, and gay boys bullied at school, and trans teenagers kicked out of their homes.

It sometimes feels like we're in a battleground, and in the context of the trauma that surrounds us, and the lesser but still urgent practical needs, our imaginings of a future utopia of polymorphous perversity seem a bit indulgent. We might want a world where the privileges of monogamy are dismantled, where there is a culture of celebrating diversity and a universal validation of relationships with many different shapes. But right now what we have to concern ourselves with is that almost all queer and trans kids grow up in fear of bully-

ing at school, and a significant number want to kill themselves because they have been kicked out of home with no resources.

What I want to argue is that we should not separate, but rather we should link, the struggle for immediate needs and the struggle for a more profound liberation. Indeed it is only in the struggle to meet immediate needs that we can lay a path to profound change and a fundamentally better society.

To take the example of housing: it is clear that an abundance and a variety of subsidized housing would be an enormous step in meeting immediate needs – helping counter the effects of poverty and taking a lot of the sting out of family transphobia and homophobia. If even modest housing were immediately accessible it would take much of the stress and conflict out of adolescent coming out crises. There are depressions that would lift, and suicides that would not happen.

In fact, it's not just queer and trans adolescents who need access to accommodation separate from their parents. Most families with adolescents at certain points need more housing options.

And as well as addressing the immediate needs of adolescents, good accommodation options would also address the needs of married people when their marriages were in trouble, or they were merely needing a little space. Whether it is a question of domestic violence, irritations about the relatives visiting, or a new sexual configuration disturbing the equilibrium of the household, access to housing would remove one of the most important constraints that too often turn a marriage into a prison.

When there are children, one of the compulsions that ties the couple together and makes it difficult to escape a marriage even though it has passed its use-by date is the expense of setting up accommodation that allows genuine co-parenting. People are forced to stay in the marital home in order to keep connected to their children or, in leaving the marriage, they also leave most of the parenting to one of the former partners, usually the mother. Decent accommodation options for families that are coming apart would remove another of the compulsions that shape marriage.

So while certainly it is true that family law, fairy tales and Hollywood are



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important forces shaping and maintaining the institution of marriage, actually it is too often simply the absence of an alternative place to live, or even to stay temporarily, that keeps a given marriage going, or determines its shape.

As with housing, so with decent free childcare, which is another thing we should be fighting for. It would remove another set of compulsions that keep in place the marriage system and gender inequality.

A program to remove those largely economic compulsions and see what people make of their lives without them seems a far more sensible way of approaching the world of the future, than to try to imagine in advance how it will look, because that is something we simply cannot know.

We cannot know the future of marriage, but we can fight for the removal of the constraints on domestic relationships. If there were true material security, which would of course include guaranteed access to well-paying jobs, the compulsions that today hold marriage and the currently prevailing family system in

place would be removed. With material security can come enormous sexual freedom and diversity of domestic arrangements.

Of course we are told that the system simply cannot pay for full employment, easily accessible decent housing and childcare, and I guess that the people who say this to us know their system and that they are right. This system can't pay for these things. So much the worse for the system. Throw it away.

And so the struggle for domestic freedom is indivisible from the struggle for socialism. The running costs of the capitalist system are simply too high.

There is an awful lot of corruption and freeloading involved in running capitalism, and also an awful lot of paperwork, all of which eats up human lives without giving anything back. And then there is the human effort wasted in financial shenanigans, and whole industries that add very little to the sum total of human happiness – banking and insurance and advertising. Capitalism is profoundly wasteful.

But the resources exist. There is a study on the basis of data for the year 2000 by the United Nations World Institute for Development Economic Research. It reports that the three richest individuals in the world possessed more financial assets than the lowest 48 nations combined. It reports that the richest one percent in the world owned 40 percent of global assets.

So the program for a world beyond marriage must be a program that addresses the obscene inefficiency and inequality of the capitalist system. Only a program of socialism can create the conditions for transcending marriage.

Exactly how will we live under socialism? We cannot know. We cannot know what will replace our current marriage and family arrangements. But we can suspect that when issues of material security are behind us, people's personal preferences will trump any considerations of family pressure or popular prejudice. And we can expect that our domestic arrangements will be extremely diverse.

